

IN THE CLAIMS

Pursuant to 37 CFR §121(c), the claim listing, including the text of the claims, will serve to replace all prior versions of the claims, in the application.

Amend claim 38, and add claims 39 through 53, as follows:

Claims 1 - 37. (Canceled)

1 38. (Currently Amended) A system, comprising:

2 a plurality of printers operationally coupled to individually respond to instructions
3 received via a network, each ~~computer~~ of the plurality of printers comprising a controller adapted
4 to determine standby print information indicative of an amount of standby print operations
5 ~~assigned received~~ via the network ~~by from~~ all of a plurality of discrete sources ~~to a corresponding~~
6 ~~one of the printers~~, a memory operatively connected to the controller, and an interface adapted to
7 transfer data between the controller and the network; and

8 a plurality of computers independently communicating by transferring data via the
9 network, each of said computers comprising a ~~microprocessor-based~~ controller, an interface
10 adapted to transfer data between the controller and the network, and a memory individually
11 registering network printer information representative of said plurality of printers, ~~and~~ each
12 controller of each of the computers being adapted to individually complete registration items of
13 network print information~~[[,]]~~ ~~and to respond to the registration by:~~

14 accessing ~~via the~~ network printer information registered in the memory of
15 ~~the at least one host computer~~ in response to reception of a command for printing
16 print-data, to ~~directly~~ transmit ~~a request command~~ ~~an~~ instruction to each of the
17 plurality of network printers via the interface ~~of the at least one host computer and~~
18 ~~the network and corresponding interfaces of the printers to command the printers~~

19 to transmit standby print information ~~to~~ via the network, ~~determine from among the~~
20 ~~printers operationally coupled to the network determining on a basis of standby~~
21 ~~print information received from the printers in response to the instruction, a least~~
22 ~~used a minimum-utilized networked printer having a lowest least~~ amount of
23 standby print operations ~~from among the printers having standby print operations~~
24 ~~from the standby print information transmitted from the networked printers to the~~
25 ~~at least one host computer in response to the request command;~~, and
26 ~~independently of others of said plurality of computers, to initiate printing~~
27 ~~of print-data by directly transmitting the print-data via the network to the printer~~
28 ~~determined to be the minimum-utilized least used network printer.~~

1 39. (New) The system of claim 38, comprised of each computer registering an item of the
2 network print information in the memory of the computer by:

3 determining whether a command for registering network printer information has
4 been received;
5 detecting the printers connected to the network; and
6 storing the network printer information in the memory.

1 40. (New) The system of claim 39, further comprised of the controller of the computer
2 assigning priority numbers to the network printer information in order of detection and storing the
3 priority numbers assigned in the memory of the computer.

1 41. (New) The system of claim 40, comprised of each computer determining a least used
2 printer by independently:
3 detecting the priority numbers assigned to a selected number of the printers having
4 the lowest amounts of standby print operations; and
5 from among said plurality of printers, selecting a printer having a preferential

6 priority number as the least used printer.

1 42. (New) The system of claim 38, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.

1 43. (New) The system of claim 39, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.

1 44. (New) The system of claim 41, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.

1 45. (New) A system, comprising:

2 a plurality of printers operationally coupled to individually respond to instructions
3 received via a network, each of the plurality of printers comprising a controller adapted to accept
4 standby print information indicative of an amount of standby print operations received via the
5 network from all of a plurality of discrete sources, a memory operatively connected to the
6 controller, and an interface adapted to transfer data between the controller and the network; and

7 a plurality of computers independently communicating by transferring data via the
8 network, and independently generating print data, each of said computers comprising a controller,
9 an interface adapted to transfer data between the controller and the network to one of the printers
10 indicated by a selection from among said plurality of printers by the controller, each memory of
11 each of the computers individually storing a registration of network printer information
12 representative of said plurality of printers, and each controller of each of the computers
13 individually responding to a print command by completing the registration by:

14 accessing via the network a representation of the amount of standby printer
15 operations stored in the memory of each of the printers in response to receptions of
16 printing print-data received from the computer and from all of the plurality of

17 sources,

18 from among said plurality of printers, making an determination of a printer
19 storing a least amount of standby print operations received from the computer and
20 from all of sources,

21 in dependence upon the determination, making said selection of a printer,
22 and

23 directly transmitting print-data via the network to the one of the printers
24 selected.

1 46. (New) The system of claim 45, comprised of each computer registering an item of the
2 network print information in the memory of the computer by:

3 determining whether a command for registering network printer information has
4 been received;

5 detecting the printers connected to the network; and
6 storing the network printer information in the memory.

1 47. (New) The system of claim 46, further comprised of the controller of each computer
2 assigning priority numbers to the network printer information in order of detection and storing the
3 priority numbers assigned in the memory of the computer.

1 48. (New) The system of claim 47, comprised of each computer determining a least used
2 printer by independently:

3 detecting the priority numbers assigned to a selected number of the printers having
4 the lowest amounts of standby print operations; and

5 from among said plurality of printers, selecting a printer having a preferential
6 priority number as the least used printer.

1 49. (New) The system of claim 38, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.

1 50. (New) The system of claim 48, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.

1 51. (New) A system, comprising:

2 a network coupler; and

3 a computer plug-coupleable to communicate over a network via said network
4 coupler with a plurality of other printers accepting print data received via the network from all of
5 a plurality of discrete sources and a plurality of other computers independently communicating by
6 transferring data and transmitting print data to selected ones of the plurality of printers via the
7 network, and independently generating print data, said computer comprising a controller, an
8 interface adapted to transfer data between the controller and the network to any one of a plurality
9 of printers coupled to the network, and a memory storing a registry of network printer information
10 representative of the plurality of printers, said controller individually responding to a print
11 command by completing the registration by:

12 compiling independently of the other computers, network printer
13 information comprising an identification of each of the plurality of printers by
14 accessing each of the plurality of printers via the network and storing in said
15 memory a representation of an identification read from each of the printers,

16 assigning priority numbers to the network printer information in order of
17 detection and storing the priority numbers assigned in the memory,

18 obtaining independently of the other computers, via the network a
19 representation from each of the printers of the amount of standby printer operations
20 stored in the a memory in response to receptions of print-data separately received
21 via the network from the computer and from the plurality of computers,

22 from among the plurality of printers, making an determination of a printer
23 storing a least amount of standby print operations received via the network from the
24 computer and from the plurality of printers,

25 in dependence upon the priority numbers and the determination, making
26 independently of the other computers, said selection of a printer, and

27 directly transmitting print-data via the network to the one of the printers
28 selected.

1 52. (New) The system of claim 51, comprised of said computer registering an item of the
2 network print information in the memory of the computer by:

3 determining whether a command for registering network printer information has
4 been received;

5 detecting the printers connected to the network; and

6 storing the network printer information in the memory.

1 53. (New) The system of claim 51, wherein the network printer information comprises an
2 Internet Protocol address of each printer.